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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000411

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [CG](#)  
SUBJECT: ITURI UPDATE: KARIM SURRENDERS, RECEIVES  
COMMISSION IN CONGOLESE MILITARY

REF: A. KINSHASA 292  
[1](#)B. KINSHASA 281  
[1](#)C. 06 KINSHASA 851

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Ituri militia leader Peter Karim surrendered with six of his senior officers April 6 to Congolese military (FARDC) authorities in Kpandroma. All were subsequently awarded officers' commissions, including the rank of colonel for Karim. Karim pledged he would not return to the bush and encouraged the remaining members of his Front for National Integration (FNI) to surrender. Nearly 600 ex-combatants in Ituri are still awaiting official demobilization packages or military integration, despite some having turned themselves in more than three months ago. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) FNI leader Peter Karim, the last active Ituri militia leader, surrendered to FARDC officials April 6 in Kpandroma, approximately 55 miles northeast of the Ituri District capital of Bunia. He was accompanied by six other high-ranking FNI officers, including Antoine Tsedha Dhelo and Desire Ndjiringa. The group turned over six AK-47s to the FARDC. All received official military commissions in an April 7 ceremony presided over by FARDC Ituri Operations Commander General Vainqueur Mayala; Karim and Dhelo were awarded the rank of colonel, while Ndjiringa was made a lieutenant colonel. The remaining four were commissioned as majors.

[1](#)3. (C) Speaking to the local population in Kpandroma April 6, Karim promised he would not return to the bush to restart fighting against the FARDC, adding that he was ready to serve anywhere Mayala or FARDC officials wanted to send him. (Note: Karim told GDRC officials last year if he joined the FARDC he would only be willing to remain in Ituri. End note.) He declared that the war in Ituri was over and encouraged people to return to their homes. Karim also pledged he would work with military authorities to convince remaining militia members to surrender. FARDC and MONUC officials in Ituri estimate there are as many as 300 FNI fighters still active throughout the region.

[1](#)4. (C) One of Karim's earlier conditions for disarmament had been a personal amnesty. There are no confirmed indications, however, that the GDRC acceded to this demand. Ndjiringa told MONUC's Radio Okapi the group surrendered without any conditions. Vice Minister of Defense Nelson Paluku told us April 9 he was not aware the GDRC had granted amnesty. Government officials have repeatedly insisted amnesty can only be granted through legislation passed by Parliament, which has not occurred.

[1](#)5. (C) Karim and his officers will join another 300 FNI

ex-combatants who surrendered to the FARDC in early March (ref A). They, along with an additional 278 former members of other Ituri militias, are still awaiting demobilization or integration at transit sites in Ituri. Many of these ex-combatants have been waiting for demobilization packages from Congolese authorities since their surrender in December 2005. Officials with the national Congolese disarmament agency, CONADER, claim they do not have the funding nor resources necessary to provide ex-combatants with "exit kits" or other materials (ref B). MONUC officials in Ituri report at least a dozen former fighters have left the camps and possibly rejoined their families or their militias.

¶6. (C) Karim's surrender marks the end of a nearly year-long saga that began when his militia killed one MONUC peacekeeper and took seven others hostage in Ituri in May 2006 (ref C). Negotiations between Karim, the GDRC and MONUC led to the peacekeepers' release in July and several written accords in which Karim promised to disband his militia and integrate into the FARDC. Although Karim failed to abide by that agreement, the GDRC successfully negotiated the disarmament of other Ituri militias. Limited FARDC operations against the FNI in February cut off Karim from his supply routes and killed several dozen militia members, effectively forcing him to accept disarmament.

¶7. (C) Comment: Karim was the last of the region's major militia leaders, and his disarmament is an important milestone for the pacification of Ituri District. It is not clear how the GDRC and FARDC will deal with Karim and others who may have committed serious human rights violations. If Congolese officials do not act quickly to demobilize or effectively integrate these ex-combatants into civilian life,

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they risk having them return to their violent pasts. End  
comment.  
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